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## THE CERAMIC MUSEUM OF SEVRES.

BY ALFRED DARCEL.



FIG. 1.—GREEK KELEBE.

THE new galleries of the manufactory of Sèvres contain the Ceramic museum.

There is a central vestibule with galleries, one devoted to opaque, and the other to translucent pottery, according to the two great divisions adopted by Brogniart. Each of the galleries is divided into two parts by a line formed of cases placed back to back, and each of these parts is again subdivided into three bays by other cases placed perpendicularly to the walls. There are offices of administration, the library

and apartments which serve as salesrooms, and the material equipment of the museum exhibits the luxury which is habitual in the state establishments of France.

The order of classification followed proceeds from the simple to the complex, following the technical and historical developments of the art. First come products which show all the rugose nudity of baked earth, and from them passes on to the slightly glazed and painted vases of antiquity, to the glazed earthenware of the Middle Ages, and the enamelled faience of the Renaissance and of modern times. Coming to the wares which, owing to a slight difference in position, offer greater resistance, he treats of the stone wares which are intermediate between faience and porcelain,—that ultimate attainment of the potters art,—with which he ends. These grand divisions of pottery into *pâte tendre* (soft paste) unglazed, lusted, and enamelled, *pâte dure opaque* (opaque hard paste), and *pâte dure translucide* (translucent hard paste), are again subdivided according to countries and periods, thus forming a methodic encyclopedia of Ceramics. This admirable classification enables any one able to derive definite knowledge on the subject of pottery from a visit to the Ceramic Museum at Sèvres.

The exhibition made a great impression upon the many visitors who came from all parts of the world during the last exposition for the purpose of studying it. There may be larger collections, but there are none more complete, or arranged according to a more natural and clearer method. A rapid survey of the show cases, following the order adopted, will easily enable us to understand its economy.

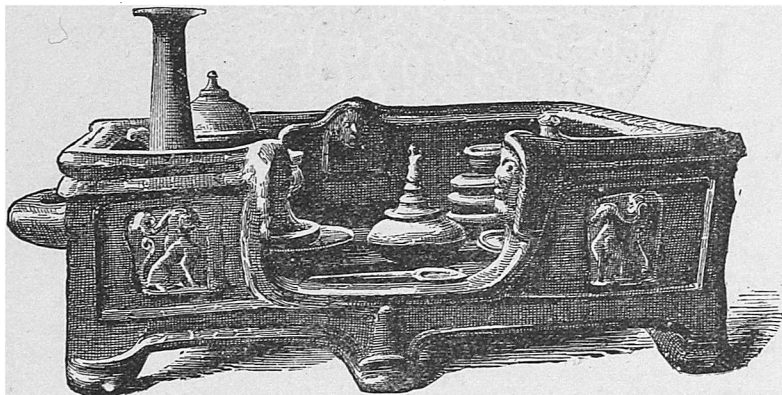


FIG. 2.—ETRUSCAN TOILET SET.

## UNGLAZED POTTERY.

Case 1 of the central line in the first gallery is devoted to Ancient Egypt. But the series of unglazed red and yellow pottery, consisting of some vases of extremely simple form, is from the very beginning broken into by the introduction of glazed, or perhaps enamelled specimens, which, logically, ought to have been introduced in other series. This kind of earthenware, covered by a blue, or green, or sometimes a gray layer, is found in the shape of perfume bottles, cups and hieratic statuettes whose rigid members are enveloped in tunics without folds.

Case 2 is given up to Greece and Phoenicia. The archaic Greek specimens are extremely like those which we shall find further on in a case devoted to Peruvian pottery, and the comparisons that can be made between the barbaric products of different countries, however widely separated they may be in point of geographical position, or of time, are fruitful of surprises. Some of the unglazed pottery in this case is of known origin; several pieces came from the excavations on the island of Milo.

## UNGLAZED AND LUSTRED POTTERY.

Cases 3 to 5 contain Greek vessels, entirely or partially lusted in yellow, black and reddish brown, the lustre applied either uniformly, or serving to design ornaments and figures, or combined with painting executed after baking. We not repeat here what has been already so well said by the Baron de Witte upon Greek vases. Although the Museum at Sèvres is far from offering the riches found at the Louvre, it nevertheless possesses specimens of all forms and styles of decoration, from the archaic specimens of Egyptian shape, upon the sides of which extend



FIG. 3.—FRENCH JUG, FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

band friezes painted in red, of an almost Assyrian style to the elegant Athenian lekythoi, the elongated bodies of which still show some traces of painting, which become fainter every day.

We here represent a kelebe (Fig. 1) decorated with figures reserved on a black ground, which presents the peculiarity that its paintings on one side (that shown in the engraving) are unfinished. While on one side the back ground is entirely covered by the black lustre applied to the finished vessel, upon the other it is simply indicated by a wide irregular streak, which outlines the figures. It was undoubtedly, left to an apprentice to complete the decoration. Some persons think, however, that the paintings were intentionally left in the condition in which we see them, and an attempt to imitate this method was made at Sèvres upon some vases exhibited in 1872. We must say, however, that the experiment gave but little satisfaction.

Case 6. The Etruscan specimens (unglazed and lusted) shown in this case are of considerable thickness, generally of rigid forms, lusted black, and often decorated with friezes in relief. Of the objects found in the tombs of Chiusi, we will mention a toilet set (Fig. 2), composed of forty pieces and placed in a sort of case which is cut on out one side.

Case 7. The unglazed and lusted Celtic, Gallic and Gallo-Roman pottery in this case leads us to the lowest depths of barbarism. This case is filled with vases of uncertain form, of

coarse, sometimes micaceous clay, fashioned without the use of the wheel, decorated with thumb-marks,—showing that ornament is a natural necessity with man,—and imperfectly baked.

Case 8. Roman pottery, unglazed and lustrated. It is a great mistake to give the name of *Samian* to those pieces of handsome red pottery, often decorated in relief, the fragments of which are found wherever Roman domination extended. The models are evidently of Italian importation, and possibly this is also the case with the clay, which is throughout of the same composition. But all of them cannot have been manufactured in Italy, as the moulds were found in many places together with the vases that had been fashioned on the spot.

Case 9 is devoted to unglazed pottery of the seventh to the sixteenth centuries, found in France. Numerous excavations made by the Abbe Cochet in Normandy, by M. Matthon in the Department of the Oise, by M. Moreau at Caranda (Aisne), and by many other explorers in other quarters, have brought to light great quantities of black pottery, of simple, but—despite their stiffness—sometimes elegant forms, and decorated with impressed geometric designs. These vessels belong to the Merovingian epochs, probably reach down to the Carolingians, whose tombs, heretofore but little known, are doubtless often confounded with those of their predecessors.

Case 10. The unglazed specimens among the old Peruvian pottery exhibited in this case strongly recall the Celtic pottery of France, while those which are lustrated and show a geometric decoration in red or brown, approach so nearly to certain archaic Greek wares that it would sometimes be difficult to tell the one from the other.

Case 11. The Mexican pottery, with which case 11 is filled



FIG. 4.—ITALIAN DRUG VASE, SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

seems to be distinguished from that of Peru by less elegance of form, and by the tendency to give to the vases the appearance masks or of animals. A decoration applied after baking upon an orange ground, and composed of geometric designs, is found upon some pottery of rigid form, which belongs the period before the conquest.

Cases 12 to 15. Of the modern pottery of Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Polynesia, here exhibited, there is nothing to be said as its rudeness is well known to everybody. A comparison with even the most archaic specimens which have come down to us from antiquity would be decidedly against it.

Art was but little occupied during the Middle Ages in the decoration of earthenware vessels, as the nobility and the burghers used only silver, pewter and the precious woods. Wood was also used by the poor people, together with the coarse earthenware of which numerous specimens are shown in Case 15.

Specimens of the same class are also found in a case of the corresponding bay, in which the late Arthur Forgeais classified the collection, given by him to the Ceramic Museum, of unglazed pottery of all times, found in the soil of what in bygone times was Lutetia and is now Paris. Among these pieces of various origin probably brought to Paris by commerce, and comprising vases, cups, lamps salt-cellars and children's toys, we instance a large jug with human mask of the beginning of the fifteenth century (Fig. 3), believed to be a caricature, the protestation of some Parisian potter against the English, his temporary masters.

The pottery in relief of Manerbe and Beauvais, brick and vessels, completes Case 16.

Case 17 carries us down to the glazed pottery of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.—Besides the products of La Chapelle-des-Pots (Charente) and the black earthen-

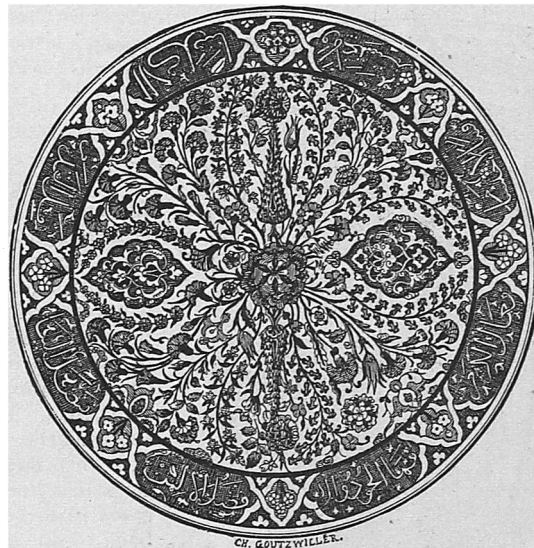


FIG. 5.—PERSIAN FAIENCE. PART OF WALL DECORATION.

ware which is believed to have been made by the Venaissin, we find here specimens of the faience of Saintonge, and the rustic *figulines* of Bernard Palissy.

Case 18 contains Italian and German glazed pottery, while Cases 19 and 20 are devoted to the same kind of ware from the East, America and Spain. In the corresponding bay are exhibited large quantities of plates, which are decorated by a slip *engobe* either according to a process practiced in Italy from the fifteenth century, in which the slip, still fresh is incised so as to show the underlying clay in the lines, or, in more elementary fashion, tracing the design directly upon the deposit formed by the slip in clay or another color. The electuary vase (drug vase) which we publish (Fig. 4), and which bears the *vitrure* of Milan and oil-cakes *tourteaux* of the Medici on the other, is a specimen of decoration by slip with *sgraffiti* borrowed from Italy.

## STONE-WARE.

Cases 21 and 22 are filled with the products of France, Germany, England, China and Japan. These wares resemble an opaque porcelain, the fusibility of which varies with the quantity of iron which colors it. The nearly white stone-wares are,

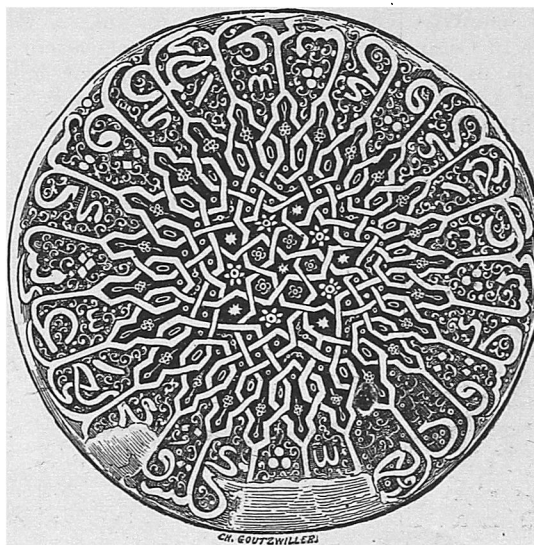


FIG. 6.—PERSIAN FAIENCE. PART OF WALL DECORATION.

in fact, capable of receiving a high fire decoration in colors, while those which are almost black, like the *boccaros* of China and Japan, can be decorated only in the muffle.

## FAIENCE.

It is well known that faience consists of a clay covered with

# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

a layer of glaze rendered opaque by the presence of a certain quantity of tin. It is a double silicate, one of the bases being an alkali. It requires a much higher baking temperature than the pottery with a simple lead glaze. It can be decorated upon the unbaked enamel, according to the method employed by the Italians of the sixteenth century, in which case the colors must be able to resist the fire up to the point of fusion of the enamel. The decoration is also executed upon the enamel after it has been fired. This is the method followed quite too often at the present time. The colors incorporate themselves only very imperfectly with the enamel, which does not undergo fusion in the muffles in which these pieces are exposed to a relatively low temperature.

Case 23 contains Hispano-Moresque and Persian faïences. We certainly shall say nothing upon this section, even if everything that can be said has not yet been uttered. It comprises very beautiful pieces among the products of the manufacturies of Spain, and has lately received considerable accessions from



FIG. 7.—CHINESE PORCELAIN VASE.

the East. The three specimens which we publish (Figs. 5, 6 and 7) are all parts of fragments of the casing of buildings. The one used as a tailpiece, of trapezoidal form, is decorated in relief, painted in blue, upon a ground vermiculated in gold-yellow.

Cases 24 to 30 are filled with faïence, etc., of various origin, as follows:—24 to 26, Italian faïence and majolica; 27 and 28, faïence of Nevers; 29, faïence of Rouen; 30, faïence of Rouen and its school, from the sixteenth century to the close of the eighteenth century. We shall content ourselves with this enumeration, although among the Nevers pieces there are some which the devotees of Poterat might certainly claim as belonging to the beginning of the Rouenese manufacture in the seventeenth century.

The series is finally brought to a close with specimens of faïence from Delft, Brussels, Marienberg, Rostrand and Germany, in Cases 35 and 36, and with Spanish and Portuguese specimens, decorated in dull blue and brownish yellow, in Case 37.

## FINE FAÏENCE.

Case 38 contains fine French faïence, such as the products of Oiron, to which collectors apply the more resonant name of Henri-Deux Ware; of Longwy (Moselle); of the Rue du Pont-aux-choux, remarkable as being cast from silver vessels; of Orleans, which is distinguished by its violet color; of Apt, in which the body, superficially veined in yellow and black, is decorated in relief in white; and of Sèvres where Lambert made it from 1785 to 1790.

Case 39 is devoted to foreign faïence of the same kind from England, Germany and Italy.

## SOFT PORCELAIN.

It will be sufficient to recall the fact that soft paste porcelain is not true porcelain, but semi-vitreous, semi-opaque sub-

stance,—a *frit*, as it is called,—by means of which an attempt was made to imitate the very beautiful products of unknown composition which, from the close of the Middle Ages, came to Europe from the extreme Orient, principally by way of Venice.

In Case 40, Italy is represented by the soft paste of Florence with the arms of the Medici, of Venice in imitation of Oriental porcelains, and of Capo di Monte; France by those of Rouen with Poterat, of Saint-Cloud with the Chicaneaus, and of Chantilly; England by those of Chelsea, Worcester and Derby; and Spain, by those of Talavera,

The manufacture of soft paste ceased at Sèvres in 1704, but was again taken up in 1849 by Ebelmen and Regnault. At present, it has once more been well nigh abandoned.

## HARD PORCELAIN.

We now come to the true porcelain, that in which the paste is made of kaolin,—an earth which is produced by the decomposition of feldspathic rocks—and with a glaze of the same nature.

Cases 41 to 44 contain Chinese porcelains (See Fig. 7), and Case 45, Japanese porcelains. The exhibits completely upset the ideas which used to be inculcated upon us, and against which our ignorance constantly rebelled, to wit, distinction between the wares of China and those of Japan. The method was somewhat radical in its simplicity; all that was common or ordinary belonged to China; all that was perfect belonged to Japan. But now the Japanese themselves have come to tell us that the porcelain industry was only quite recently imported into their country from China, having been introduced thence as late as the beginning of the sixteenth century. As to the porcelain of Corea, that is almost entirely out of the question now, more especially since the shipments made by the French agents com-



FIG. 8.—PERSIAN PORCELAIN VASE.

missioned to purchase pieces of undoubted origin have revealed to us a strange state of barbarism. Thus all classifications are upset. But the porcelain of Persia is still spoken of, and we even publish a specimen (Fig. 8) decorated with low reliefs under a green glaze.

Cases 46 to 50 contain Saxon porcelain, the first made in Europe. The specimens of white ware, decorated in relief are not of the most beautiful kind, such as may be studied in the Japanese Palace in Dresden; but we shall find some of the deceptive imitations of Chinese decoration, in which the branches of the peach tree serve as a motive, and which is in turn imitated on soft paste at Chantilly. Specimens of the porcelain of Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden will be found in Case 51.

Cases 52 and 53 are filled with French porcelain of various origin.

Cases 54 to 60 bringing us to the hard porcelain at Sèvres. The first three are devoted to early specimens, still inspired by



by the models used for soft paste, but which underwent a slow transformation under the influence of the school of David, represented in the industrial arts at Percier. With case 57 begins the series of more modern porcelain, and that the experiments to which the products of Sèvres owe their present physiognomy. Case 60—the last—contains biscuit.

All decorated pottery, if it is to be as perfect as its nature will permit, ought to allow of firing body and decoration simultaneously; that is to say, one and the same temperature must suffice to fuse the colors and to incorporate them with the glaze, and this latter must attach itself absolutely to the incipient. Some of these colors are fluid, like the cobalt blues, and mix with the glaze without forming a relief; others are thick and not transparent. In China, those pieces of porcelain which have uniform or variegated ground are decorated according to the principle just enunciated. The flower designs, animals, or figures, colors of great fusibility are employed, and sometimes even those colors are used which can be fired in the muffle. But as the composition of the body and the glaze of Chinese porcelain allows firing at a much lower temperature than that which is necessary for Sèvres porcelain (the composition of which differs somewhat from the Chinese, the colors, especially those which fuse at a medium temperature *couleurs de demi-grand feu*), combine with and are enveloped by the glaze. The only color known at Sèvres which could be submitted to the same firing as the body, was for a long time the lapis-lazuli blue, the well known radiant and deep blue of Sèvres. All the others were either *couleurs de demi grand feu*, or muffle colors. These colors, however, not only made the palette of the painter all the richer, but even too rich. There was a discord between the nature of the ground and that of the surface. Very often the glaze did not cover the painting, and the latter had the same aspect that it might have presented had it been painted on faience or on japanned tin. Hence when the study of the conditions of decorative art had shown that an intimate harmony ought to exist between the ornament and the material, it became necessary to seek colors which could stand the same temperature as the porcelain, in order to decorate the latter as it ought to be decorated, and as it is in the East.

The Curator of the Museum, M. Champfleury, is active, and takes an interest in all manifestations of art, especially the immensely popular form of art which finds its expression in Ceramics. He is seconded by public favor, and enjoys a European fame for the order and method he has exhibited in the classification of the objects exhibited.

## ÆSTHETIC MISTAKES IN FURNISHING—THE PARLOR CENTRE TABLE.

BY ADA CONE.



ALL the furnishings of a room should subserve the purposes for which the room is designed to be used, and any piece of furniture or ornament which does not subserve the purpose of the room is superfluous and out of taste. This proposition in the abstract perhaps none will deny. To obey it in actual furnishing, however, seems to quite another matter, and to require a sterner ability to apply logic than most people possess; which inference is thrust upon one by a glance at the parlor furnishings in vogue, so much of which ignores the proposition completely.

For an example of the neglect, to apply theory in furnishing, take the parlor centre table. It cannot be contended that because a few persons of taste have discarded it, it is therefore out of fashion, it is an institution, as orthodox as the hymn book. It is practically universal; in expensive as well as in humble houses still the objective point and the *pièce de résistance* of the room. And yet it is a clear violation of the law.

The fact that this piece of furniture holds so tenaciously its place, though contrary to convenience and taste points to an ideal in furnishing the parlor other than that of convenience and taste and if we cast our eyes over the room as usually furnished we shall find that the whole scheme is consistent with the centre piece, and it will no great discernment to name the ideal. Every object in the room, it will be found, is set out to challenge the eyes for its own intrinsic merit, implying directly that the common ideal of the parlor is a museum.

If this view were the correct one there would be no impropriety in placing objects for inspection and in obliging guests to thread their way carefully about for fear of upsetting them. And furthermore it would be in accord were we to place printed slips saying; "Do not Handle;" "Have a Care," etc., for in a museum visitors are properly subordinate to the display and must be content to lose themselves in the objects about them.

But authority says that the parlor is a withdrawing room, for the reception of guests; a place to meet others than the family, where greetings and conversation are the amenities. Let us inquire whether the museum idea is compatible with this definition.

A room in which to receive. The first demand in such a room must be space. It should appear generous in its welcome and to this end should be as spacious as can be afforded. The objective figure of the bedroom is properly the bed, and fashion for once, agreeing with taste, has drawn the bed out from alcoves and niches where formerly it was stowed away, and elevated it to its rightful position, the most conspicuous place in the room; in the dining room the table fills the eye, and if it is wished to see how fitly let it be once moved to the wall and the sense of defective arrangement will instantly be touched; desks and tables—even centre tables—are for study, workroom and library; mirror for dressing room, couches for boudoirs, but for the parlor there should be space and convenient seats. These are of the first importance and the only necessities.

Greetings and conversation are the amenities. Then the guests are of more importance than the bric-a-brac, and the more strenuously the furnishings demand attention, the more impertinent they become.

This relegates a great many things we have set store by to limbo, and among them the centre table. And I cannot but think that everyone who has had the ill luck to jostle one, with its frail load, and its slippery cover making accident always imminent, will say good riddance to rubbish, and hope that the friend who devised the fashion is where he can have joy of them.

For the museum idea it may be said that the impulse which places our trinkets, the prettiest things we have, where our visitors can see them, is a natural one, born not entirely of vanity but largely of the desire to entertain. But this is beside the question of what the furnishing should be to answer æsthetic requirements. No room overloaded with small moveables can have any character; it is inhospitable to fill with objects space which might be left for the free movement of guests, and a room set out with devices to catch the eye suggests a barrenness of mind in the guest who, not capable of entertaining each other by interchange of thought, must be amused with toys, like children.

It will not be easy for those whose ideal parlor has been a show room to follow to its logical conclusion in furnishing, the theory of a room solely to make guests at ease in. For if we subscribe to the proposition laid down at the beginning, that, furniture which does not promote the purpose of the room is superfluous; if we concede that the parlor should be furnished only as a sitting-room for people, then we are forced to agree that our little moveables are out of taste and must be incontinently turned out; and this leaves us in what seems a frightfully shorn condition to people who have been used to losing themselves among bow-legged tables, easels, stuffed birds, and tidies with large bows.

But we are not forbidden ornamentation; only that sort which vulgarly asks inspection, and inhospitably fills space. The parlor should, in truth, be the most beautiful room in the house, but its ornamentation should be like that of a jewel casket. On the walls may be expended the utmost wealth of art; the floor and ceiling may be jewelled; a pier table may fall into its place between uprights as an element of the architecture. If the room is large, statuary, porcelain jars, or their decorative equivalent, may be judiciously placed in corners, and other wares to break space agreeably; but such floor interruptions must be only with the purpose to make space more effective and not at all to display the object, space or promoting the interchange of thought between guests remaining always the ruling idea. All should be substantial, solid, and should fall harmoniously into place as part of the well setting.

To this end what is spent in bric-a-brac should be put into a tapestry hanging; what goes for fragile epergnes, and showily bound books which no one opens, into a painted canvas, a fresco, or a rug. The best models for a reception room are found in photographs of historical houses of state.